

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1609

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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 8687

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, UN, LA

SUBJECT: NARCOTICS ENFORCEMENT IN LAOS

REF: VIENTIANE 8491

1. I RAISED THE QUESTION OF NARCOTICS ENFORCEMENT IN LAOS WITH MINISTER OF JUSTICE KHAMKING SOUVANLASI NOVEMBER 26. I SAID THAT I WAS AWARE OF THE FACT THAT THE CABINET HAD SENT THE UNFDAC PROPOSAL FOR A PROGRAM IN LAOS TO THE MINISTRY OF ECONOMY AND PLANNING FOR FURTHER STUDY AND ASKED WHETHER IN THE MINISTER'S OPINION THE PATHET LAO WERE INCLINED TO CO-OPERATE WITH THE U.S. AND VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN CONTROLLING NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING. THE MINISTER REPLIED THAT THE PATHET LAO ATTITUDE WAS VERY HARD TO DISCERN. SEVERAL PATHET LAO MINISTERS HAVE INFORMED HIM CASUALLY THAT THE PL INTEND TO ELIMINATE THE GROWING OF POPPIES IN THEIR ZONE, BUT HE HAD NO IDEA HOW THEY PROPOSED TO GO ABOUT THIS.

2. RETURNING TO THE QUESTION OF THE UNFDAC PROJECT THE MINISTER REVIEWED THE DISCUSSION WHICH HAD TAKEN PLACE AT THE CABINET MEETING ON NOVEMBER 21. REPORTEDLY ACTING DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER/INTERIOR MINISTER
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PHENG PHONGSAVAN, WHO CHAIRED THE MEETING, OUTLINED

THE GENERAL CONTENT OF THE PROPOSED UN PROGRAM AND RECOMMENDED THAT IT BE ACCEPTED BY THE PGNU AS A SUPPLEMENT TO ONGOING LAO-AMERICAN EFFORTS. SEVERAL PATHET LAO MINISTERS, INCLUDING MINISTER OF RELIGION (MAHA) KOU SOUVANMETHI, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERIOR DEUANE SOUNNALATH AND SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH, KHAMLIENG PHOLSENA, AS WELL AS NEUTRALIST MINISTER OF POSTS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS KHAMPHENG BOUPHA, EXPRESSED STRONG OPPOSITION TO THE PROPOSED PROGRAM. VIENTIANE SIDE HEALTH MINISTER KHAMPHAY ABHAY TOOK UP THE CUDGELS FOR THE PROGRAM NOTING THE LARGE NUMBER OF LAO ADDICTS UNDERGOING TREATMENT AT THE NATIONAL DETOXIFICATION CENTER. KHAMPHENG HOWEVER STATED THAT OPIUM PROVIDES A NECESSARY SOURCE OF CASH INCOME TO THE HILL TRIBE PEOPLE; HE EXPRESSED RELUCTANCE ABOUT HAVING THE EXISTING LAW ENFORCED BECAUSE OF THE ECONOMIC HARDSHIP IT WOULD CAUSE THE HILL TRIBES. MINISTER OF INFORMATION (PL) SOUK VONGSAK OPINED THAT IT WOULD BE IDEAL TO ACCEPT THE UN MONEY, BUT NOT THEIR EXPERTS. TIANETHONE CHANTHARASY, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE CABINET WOULD NOT REJECT THE UNFDAC PROJECT OUT OF HAND. IN THE END, THE CABINET DECIDED TO REFER THE MATTER BACK TO THE MINISTRY OF ECONOMY FOR FURTHER CLARIFICATION FROM THE UN IN THE HOPES OF OBTAINING A PROJECT WHICH WOULD BE DEVOID OF SURVEYS, AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE AND UN ADVISERS.

3. TURNING TO THE QUESTION OF LAO STATUTES WITH REGARD TO NARCOTICS, I MENTIONED THE CASE OF GREGORY CHARLES RODGERS, THE AUSTRALIAN WHO IS PRESENTLY INCARCERATED IN VIENTIANE. I NOTED THAT THE ATTEMPT OF THIS INDIVIDUAL TO TRAFFIC IN HASHISH WAS A NEW DEVELOPMENT AND I ASKED WHETHER THE MINISTER WAS PLANNING ANY AMENDMENTS TO EXISTING STATUTES WHICH WOULD COVER TRAFFICKING IN MARIJUANA AND/OR HASHISH. THE MINISTER REPLIED THAT HE REALIZED THE EXISTING LAO STATUTES WERE BADLY DRAFTED AND THAT THERE WERE GAPS WHICH SHOULD BE CLOSED. HE SAID HE HAD HIS STAFF WORKING ON IMPLEMENTING REGULATIONS WHICH COULD BE ISSUED BY ROYAL DECREE. THE

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PROBLEM IN HIS MINISTRY WAS THAT THE PATHET LAO WERE EXCEEDINGLY SLOW IN AGREEING TO VARIOUS AMENDMENTS HE WAS PROPOSING TO OTHER LAWS. HE DOUBTED THEREFORE THAT HIS PATHET LAO SECRETARY OF STATE WOULD ACT RAPIDLY ON THE QUESTION OF AMENDMENTS TO THE LAO NARCOTICS STATUTE. I URGED THE MINISTER TO PROCEED WITH THE FORMULATION OF AMENDMENTS TO THE ANTI-NARCOTICS LAW SINCE THE MANNER IN WHICH THE PATHET

LAO APPROACH THIS QUESTION WOULD GIVE US ALL AN
INDICATION OF THEIR OUTLOOK TOWARDS THE INTERNATIONAL
NARCOTICS PROBLEM.
WHITEHOUSE

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